



NEWS RELEASE

HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF FIRE & RESCUE

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Ground-based Sparklers Prohibited in Howard County *Law Passed in 2003 Made Use or Sale Illegal*

As the July 4th holiday approaches, the Howard County Department of Police and the Howard County Department of Fire and Rescue are taking efforts to inform citizens and businesses about county fireworks laws. The Howard County Council passed legislation in 2003 prohibiting the sale, possession and use of ground-based sparklers.

The police and fire departments are contacting retailers in the county to ensure that these illegal fireworks are not sold. They also are posting flyers in communities to help educate citizens about the law. Violators will be subject to a fine of up to \$250.

The Howard County bill was introduced after the Maryland General Assembly added, for the first time in 60 years, certain ground-based sparkling devices to the list of legal fireworks in 2002. As a result of the change in the state law, Howard County Fire and Rescue responded to 12 calls related to ground-based sparklers in the few weeks leading up to the July 4th holiday that year. Most of the calls were for brush fires that endangered homes and other structures. In many of those cases, structural damage was only averted by the quick response of the fire department.

In another case, a young child was treated for first- and second-degree burns on her face following a July 4th incident with a ground-based sparkler. Later in the year, the police department, fire department and Bomb Squad responded to a report of an explosive device in a mailbox that turned out to be a ground-based sparkler.

In response to the change in the state law making ground-based sparklers legal, and the significant safety risk associated with the devices, the county council passed legislation prohibiting ground-based sparklers in Howard County.

The law does not affect the sale or use of other fireworks, such as handheld sparklers, party poppers, ignitable “snakes” and “snap n’ pops.”

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